COLLABORATION AS SERVICE

Humanities Librarians, Technologists, and Researchers

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Kate Dohe, Digital Programs & Initiatives Manager, UMD Libraries
A CONFESSION

I am not a humanities librarian.
1. Defining Ground

Scoping Value, Projects, and Labor
SERVICES / PROJECTS

SERVICES
Ongoing activities and programs in support of the research and instructional mission of the institution.

PROJECTS
Discrete initiatives with measurable milestones and (theoretically) clearly articulated objectives.
THE RISE OF THE BOUTIQUE

Highly individualized, labor-intensive projects and services require a significant investment of attention and energy by liaison librarians.
How do we know our work and skills are valued? Who values our labor, and to what extent does that value impact our capacity?
INDICATORS OF VALUE

Economic
Value is demonstrated through financial support, either directly or indirectly.

Intellectual
Value is manifested through credit and documentation of contributions.

Emotional
Value is expressed with goodwill, enthusiasm, and “surprise and delight.”
2. INIQUITIES OF VALUE

Collaboration in the Technocracy
COLLABORATION

A skill, a mandate, and a framework
THE COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

- Faculty
- Students
- Functional Specialists
- Developers & Systems
- Institutional Partners
EXPRESSIONS OF VALUE

How is collaboration valued within the context of humanities librarianship, and how does that differ from the value of “functional expertise”? 
By ignoring librarians and library workers in favor of technology, the Trend Library valorizes the work of library administration and information technology, areas dominated by white men, while devaluing the service, care, maintenance, and manual labor that is at the core of libraries’ everyday functioning but is dominated by lower-earning white women and people of color.

- Mirza & Seale 2017
3. COLLABORATION-AS-SERVICE
Re-positioning expertise
DIGITAL DATA SERVICES AT UMD

We share our unique technological expertise to generate funding that can be reinvested in our libraries.
DIGITAL DATA SERVICES AT UMD

Data

Software

Digitization
Greater Capacity
Steady revenue helps us hire more staff

New Expertise
New staff and projects help us learn

More Projects
Library services and internal projects gain support
Could the same approach apply to humanities librarians engaged in boutique project support?
TRANSLATED SKILLS

Many of the unique abilities of humanities librarians—collaboration, communication, research, negotiation, empathy, user analysis—translate to product management work.
The emotional and intellectual labor of librarianship comes with significant costs that can be articulated and measured.
THANKS!

Discussion?

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REFERENCES


DESIGN CREDITS

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